

THE CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

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1. A melt-resistant fudge article which comprises:

a liquid fat component in an amount sufficient to minimize external adhesiveness of the article;

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a matrix of sugar crystals comprising a plurality of pores sized and shaped sufficiently to retain the liquid fat component by capillary attraction and with sugar glass being present in an amount sufficient to temporarily bind the sugar crystals to each other at temperatures up to about 40°C; and

an emulsifier component to facilitate formation of the liquid fat component into droplets of at least substantially uniform size,

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wherein the article is substantially free of added moisture and has a glossy appearance resembling that of chocolate, and wherein the article substantially retains its shape and appearance at temperatures up to about 40°C yet is flowable at more elevated temperatures to facilitate processing thereof.

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2. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 1, wherein the processing comprises an enrobing process whereby a portion of a confectionery product is enrobed with the article.

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3. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 1, wherein the elevated temperature is at least about 45°C.

4. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 1, wherein the sugar crystals comprise one or more sugars, sugar alcohols, or a combination thereof.

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5. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 1, wherein the sugar crystals comprise one or more of sucrose, glucose, fructose, lactose, lactulose, maltose, trehalose, invert sugar, corn syrup, honey, sorbitol, mannitol, maltitol, xylitol, erythritol, lactitol, or any combination thereof.

6. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 1, wherein the sugar crystals comprise sucrose, corn syrup, sorbitol, or a combination thereof.

7. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 4, further comprising non-fat milk, and wherein the liquid fat component comprises coconut oil and soy oil.

8. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 4, further comprising a stabilizer component.

9. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 8, wherein the stabilizer component comprises maltodextrin.

10. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 1, wherein the emulsifier component comprises any combination of monoglycerides, mono-diglycerides, or both.

11. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 1, wherein the liquid fat component is an oil that is present in an amount of about 0.01 percent up to 30 percent of the article, and wherein a solid portion of the fat comprises one or more animal or vegetable fats, or a combination thereof, such that the solid fat content is below about 10 weight percent at 20°C and below about 1 weight percent at 40°C.

12. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 1, further comprising a stabilizer component in an amount sufficient to inhibit breakdown of the article which stabilizer component comprises one or more of polydextrose, maltodextrin, inulin, fructooligosaccharides, pectin, guar gum, locust bean gum, tara gum, fenugreek gum, mixed linkage β -glucans, oat bran, barley bran, methyl cellulose, carboxymethyl cellulose, microcrystalline cellulose, or a combination thereof.

13. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 1, wherein about 75 to 95 weight percent of sugar is present as crystals and about 5 to 25 weight percent liquid fat component are present, with the remainder being the emulsifier component.

14. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 1, wherein the sugar crystals have a mean size of about 15 to 25 μm .

15. The melt-resistant fudge article of claim 1, wherein the article has a water activity of about 0.44 to 0.52 and the melt-resistant article is a coating.

16. A coated confectionery article, which comprises a confectionery product having at least a portion enrobed with the melt-resistant fudge article of claim 1.

17. A method of enrobing which comprises:
providing a melt-resistant fudge article that comprises a liquid fat component in an amount sufficient to minimize external adhesiveness of the article, a matrix of sugar crystals comprising a plurality of pores sized and shaped sufficiently to retain the liquid fat component by capillary attraction and being present in an amount sufficient so that the sugar crystals are bound to each other at temperatures up to about 40°C, and an emulsifier component to facilitate formation of the liquid fat component into droplets of at least substantially uniform size;
enrobing a portion of a confectionery product with the melt-resistant fudge article at a temperature of at least about 50°C so that the article is flowable; and
permitting the enrobed product to cool sufficient so that the article has a glossy appearance resembling that of chocolate and substantially retains its shape and appearance at temperatures up to about 40°C, wherein the article is substantially free of added moisture.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the permitting comprises chilling the enrobed confectionery product to provide active cooling.

19. The method of claim 17, wherein the providing comprises an article selected to include about 5 to 15 weight percent liquid fat component with about 80 to 95 weight percent of the sugar as crystals, with the remainder being the emulsifier component.

20. A method of providing a melt-resistant fudge article which comprises:
combining liquid components comprising a liquid fat component in an amount sufficient to minimize external adhesiveness of the article, and a matrix of sugar crystals

comprising a plurality of pores sized and shaped sufficiently to retain the liquid fat component by capillary attraction and being present in an amount sufficient so that the sugar crystals are bound to each other at temperatures up to about 40°C, at a temperature of at least about 50°C to form a liquid mixture;

5 then combining one or more solid components comprising an emulsifier component to facilitate formation of the liquid fat component into droplets of at least substantially uniform size so as to form a fudge article mixture;

 reducing the temperature of the fudge article mixture below 40°C to form a solid, melt-resistant fudge article, wherein the article is substantially free of added moisture.

10 21. The method of claim 20, further comprising:
 shaping the melt-resistant fudge article at a temperature of at least about 55°C to render the article flowable before reducing the temperature thereof; and

15 disposing the flowable article adjacent a portion of a confectionery product so that it solidifies and adheres thereto after the temperature reduction below 40°C to provide the confectionery product with a glossy appearance resembling that of chocolate.

22. The method of claim 20, wherein at least one solid component is combined with the liquid mixture to form the fudge article mixture.